125

BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

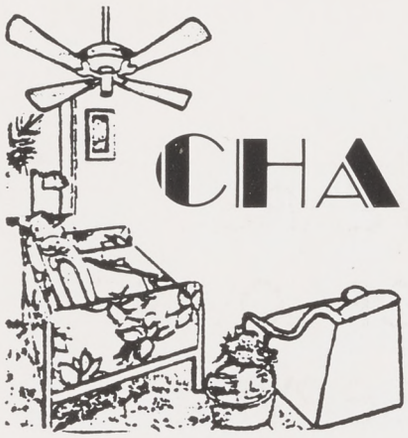
TO THE CHURCH • TO THE WORLD

UFMCC

1968 — 1983

journey

OCTOBER 1983



CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

by Nancy Radclyffe

Collective Writer and Senior Chaplain

Ministering to the Sick

As followers of Jesus we are to "look after the sick" (Mt. 25:36 NIV). This is a ministry function which many lay and clergy people find difficult if not impossible to meet. With the AIDS crisis, this aspect of our calling now looms at us – it is unavoidable. Visiting a friend with a broken leg is one thing but ministering to a person who is very ill and/or dying meets a resistance in many of us. What are the sources of this resistance? How may we overcome it? How do we make such visits fruitful for the patient and us?

A frequent fear is of the institution and the building itself. A fear of going into and through the hospital. If you are a clergy-person or deacon, a call to the Chaplain's office or public relations office of the institution will usually result in a tour of the hospital and an explanation of procedures. You may find it well worth your while to donate a couple of hours a week for three to six months as a volunteer working with patients. Both of these are helpful in breaking down the institutional barrier and not just for that hospital but for others as well.

Another source of resistance is the fact that we confront our own mortality when we encounter another whose life is nearer the end. This dread may be semi-conscious rather than acknowledged within us. We begin to overcome it by recognizing our fear and talking about it perhaps with a counselor. For spiritual growth, spend some study/meditation time on resurrection scriptures. This can help shift our attention from the finitude of this life to the magnitude of our life in Jesus the Messiah. We will be freed to more fruitful ministry by opening ourselves to God's healing of this inhibition.

Still another inhibition may be even more hidden and less acknowledged within us. Its root is a faulty assumption of much of Christianity – that Christians are perfect, whole people. That faulty assumption tells us that persons with illnesses such as cancer, AIDS, etc. must be imperfect and out of God's grace. This irrational response nags at us that contact with these carriers may subject us to God's wrath – a guilt by association response. Not contagion in the medical sense (although we must address that fear, too) but a spiritual contagion.

Once again, recognition of this inhibitor is an important step to overcoming it. Recognize that God is the bearer of good and through Jesus we have been promised a life of abundance, including health, not of plagues. The disease has its source outside of God and we are the bearers of life and hope as God's servants.

Before entering an institution, stop and say a prayer requesting the Holy Spirit's cleansing/protective presence for the patient and you. Then request an anointing to be the channel of blessing, of comfort, of hope, of peace and yes, even of healing. Then trust that God has granted these.

This brings us to what to do once we are actually in the presence of the patient. Have a couple of opening lines ready. I try to make them light and funny. I am there to bring life. People who are sick, including the dying, want to talk about their concerns surrounding the illness. These may be health, financial, social or how others, especially loved ones, are being affected.

As their pastor, deacon or close friend, you are an ideal person to listen. Provide the openings for the patient to talk. If they do not then that's alright. It's their choice to talk or not to talk.

Do not feel that you must find resolutions to the expressed concerns. A good listener is their need at this point. Assuring statements like, "I'm sure that's difficult," "Yes, it must be painful for you," "Our loved ones are always a big concern, aren't they?" Show you hear and care. You may be able to address some need such as getting the lover to talk. However, do not fall into the trap of feeling you must find the answers or solutions.

Prayer is very appropriate. I will usually ask if they want prayer and/or anointing with oil and I ask what they want me to pray about and then respond accordingly. Reading a brief relevant scripture may accompany this. The American Bible Society has some inexpensive scripture flyers and booklets for use with the sick and bereaved. Bringing and serving communion is another ministry especially before surgery or when patients have missed worship.

In the 17th and 18th centuries hymnals were used as prayer and inspiration books. The words of a hymn would be read as a prayer to guide or comfort. When the sick were visited, the hymnal went along. This remains a source for us as well. Choose a hymn you know the person likes or let them choose one or you may pick one you feel is relevant. Read it. This provides something to do while visiting and frequently provides a blessing for listener and reader.

Embrace these occasions to minister trusting that God will provide all that you need to minister.

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journey

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JOURNEY is a monthly magazine of UFMCC. The focus of JOURNEY is to provide news and report issues of concern within UFMCC and the Lesbian and Gay community. Contents are copyrighted and may not be reproduced or extensively quoted without permission.

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15 YEARS OF LOVING SERVICE

by Troy Perry
Elder, Founder UFMCC

As we prepare this month to celebrate the 15th Anniversary of the founding of the Parent Church of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, I still never cease to be amazed about the seeming dichotomy that exists between the time when MCC was founded 15 years ago and 1983.

Three recent events point up the changes and non-changes that have taken place during this time period. Within the last week of this writing, I was one of 10 Gay people that met with Rev. Jesse Jackson, who is thinking of declaring himself as a candidate for President of the United States as a part of the Democratic Party. Fifteen years ago, when MCC was founded, no politician in America felt that there was any need for support from the Gay and Lesbian community in their quest for any political office in the United States. Today, at least as far as the Democratic Party is concerned, all of the seven announced candidates have actually sought support from our community. Hearing Jackson talk to our small group and discuss a formation of a "rainbow" coalition made up of women, Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, Gays and Lesbians made me realize again how far we have come in our quest for political action on behalf of our community.

The second thing that happened took me back again to the early days of MCC and let me know that in some areas it is business as usual. I am delighted that three weeks ago I had the opportunity to debate Jerry Falwell, head of the Moral Majority in America, on national television in Canada via satellite. It was wonderful! I debated Falwell for about 19 minutes and I believe that I came out the winner (if anyone wins debates). It's the first time that Falwell has had to debate anyone from the Gay and Lesbian religious community. Perhaps I did too good of a job. Last week Channel 4, Los Angeles' local NBC station, phoned our office to see if I would be willing to debate Falwell when he visited our city. I told them that I would be happy to, but they phoned back and said Falwell had refused to debate me.

I believe when you have the truth on your side you can intelligently debate people like spokespersons from the Moral Majority and win. Our debate, of course, was on the AIDS crisis which is rocking America. Falwell believes that AIDS is God's gift to promiscuous homosexuals, just as he believes herpes is God's gift to promiscuous heterosexuals. I, of course, took the opposite view and asked the

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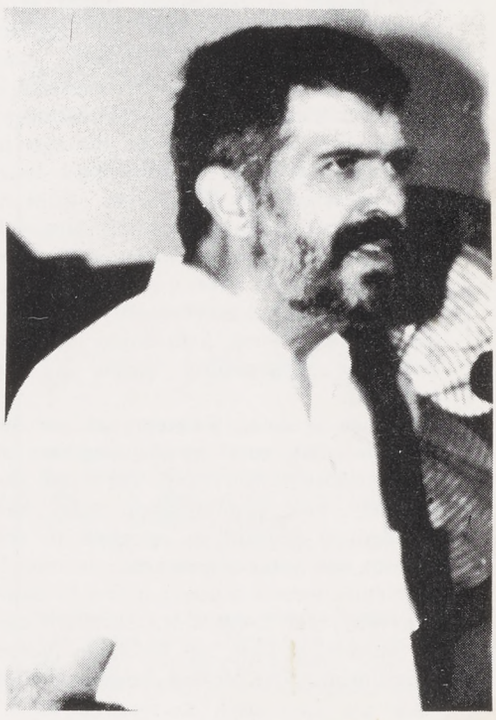
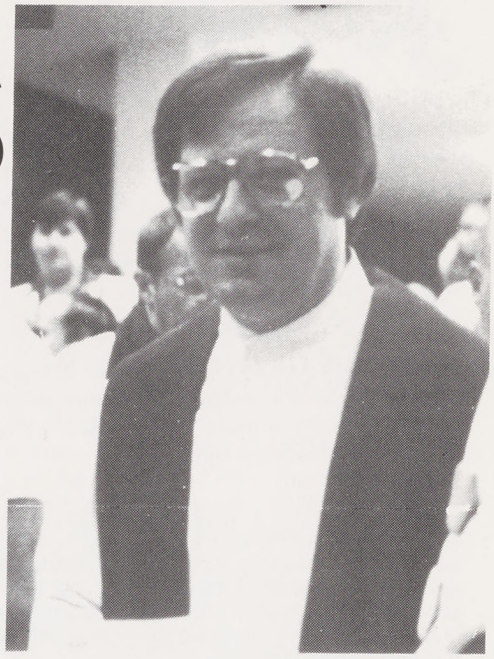


Troy Perry

profiles



Don Eastman

Editor's Note: The following article about Rev. Don Eastman's election to the Board of Elders appeared in the Dallas METRO TIMES on August 4, 1983 and we are reprinting it with permission. We wanted to share with you what they are saying about us.

LOCAL PASTOR HONORED,

by Roy G. Hall
Metro Times Dallas

Anyone familiar with the background of Don Eastman, pastor of Dallas' Metropolitan Community Church since 1978, should show no surprise that Rev. Eastman was picked recently to be one of the seven elders who govern the International Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC), a denomination with a primary outreach to the Lesbian and Gay community.

Eastman, still boyishly good looking at 42, was one of five children born to a religious (Assembly of God) family in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. His only brother is well known in evangelical circles as a best-selling religious author who appears frequently on religious television. One sister is married to a minister, a second is married to a man studying for the ministry, and a third is spending the summer in Europe as part of a missionary tour.

Following his graduation from a religious college in Springfield, Missouri, Eastman pastored a church in Neenah, Wisconsin, for six years before moving to Des Moines to act as Program Director of the American Lung Association of Iowa, which he subsequently served as Vice President.

While in Iowa, Eastman read in the *Advocate*, a national Gay newsmagazine, of the activities of Rev. Troy Perry and the relatively new denomination Perry had founded to provide an outreach to the Lesbian and Gay community. Intrigued, Eastman obtained a copy of Perry's autobiography, *The Lord is My Shepherd and He Knows I'm Gay*. In 1974, he started attending the Des Moines congregation of MCC.

After being licensed as a clergy at the international General Conference of the denomination held in Dallas in 1975, Eastman served the Des Moines church as pastor concurrently with his work with the American Lung Association. In his role as pastor, Eastman debated with Anita Bryant on the radio and was invited to her home in Miami.

In February of 1978, following an overwhelmingly positive vote to call him to the empty pulpit of MCC - Dallas, Eastman sacrificed his well-paid position with the Lung Association and moved to Dallas where, under his leadership, membership of the church has increased from 176 to a whopping 524.

Eastman's election to the office of elder at the recent General Conference held last month in Toronto, Canada, he says, is indicative in part of the long-time role that the local congregation has played in the donomination as a whole. The Dallas church is one of the largest and most successful congregations in the fellowship. Its music director, Danny Ray, was part of the planning team for the Toronto conference and was responsible for the music there. Another local man, Patrick Sterling, was named to coordinate sign language interpretation for the hearing impaired during the conference.

Eastman has been active in the denomination's project to gain membership in the National Council of Churches, a group which, he feels, will either delay or deny the coveted membership when a final vote is made.

The newly elected elder's main regret is that his election will necessarily postpone his hoped for sabbatical trip to Israel.

Since its organization in 1970 and chartering in 1971, the Dallas church has grown to the point that its present facilities, to which it moved in October of 1976, are barely large enough to hold Sunday worship services. A search for an acceptable new location has, however, been unsuccessful.

In addition to offering its facilities to community organizations such as the Dallas Gay Alliance and Oak Lawn Symphonic Band, MCC's members have provided the nucleus of a number of other community organizations, both religious and secular. ■

Elected to 2nd term

REV. ELDER JERI ANN HARVEY

JERI ANN HARVEY was born January 3, 1934 in Oklahoma City, OK. She graduated from high school in 1952 and received her B.S. degree from the University of Oklahoma in 1961. She served two years with the U.S. Navy 1952-54 and was honorably discharged. She has studied Theology at Oklahoma South Western University, no degree.

Prior to the ministry Harvey worked as a Medical Technologist and Psychiatric Technician in private clinics and the V.A. Hospital.

Harvey has had several articles and poetry published prior to her ministry and was recorded as a singer with the Nelson Riddle orchestra in 1953.

She has been a member of UFMCC since 1972 and was licensed as a minister in Dallas, TX in 1975, Ordained in Denver, CO in 1977, and elected to the Board of Elders in Los Angeles in 1979. She has pastored Christ the King MCC in Oklahoma City and is their Pastor Emeritus, MCC of the Resurrection, Houston, TX and in April of 1978 was the first woman elected to pastor the founding church in Los Angeles where she still pastors.

She has served as the District Coordinator of the South Central District and as the Liaison Elder for the Districts of Australia and Eastern Canada.

Harvey serves on the national board of directors of The Human Rights Campaign Fund and is a member of several Los Angeles organizations. She is a popular preacher and lecturer. ■

Elected to 3rd term

REV. ELDER NANCY L. WILSON

NANCY WILSON is a native of Plainview, Long Island, NY, and a graduate of Allegheny College. She attended Boston University School of Theology on a Rockefeller Fellowship and received a Masters of Divinity from SS. Cyril and Methodius Seminary (Roman Catholic) in Orchard Lake, MI.

She has served Metropolitan Community Churches in Boston and Worcester, MA and Detroit, MI; and was formerly the District Coordinator of the Northeast District. Wilson was reelected to the Board of Elders of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches for a third term in 1983, and serves as full-time Clerk/Administrator of the Fellowship Headquarters in Los Angeles.

Wilson currently serves as a member of the resident faculty of Samaritan Education Center and as co-chair of the Department of Ecumenical Relations, which she founded. She and Mr. R. Adam DeBaugh are responsible for handling UFMCC's Application to the National Council of Churches. ■

Rev. Nancy Wilson (left) and Rev. Jeri Ann Harvey smile at the prospects of finding gold, while vacationing in Alaska.

Commission On Laity Elections

Jackie Walker grew up in a small southern town. As a young person, she was very active in the Baptist Church. When she went away to college, she strayed away from the church but not from God.

By profession, she is a teacher and has been involved with her local association as a negotiator, as chair of various committees, and as a member of the judicial board.

Jackie came to MCC Detroit in February of 1975. She attended and was active for over a year before joining. About a month after she joined she was elected to the Board of Directors and later became Vice Moderator of the Board.

In 1977, when the Commission on the Laity was formed, she was elected to represent the Great Lakes District and continued to serve in that capacity until May of 1983.

Jackie served as Assistant Chair of COL from August of 1981 until July of 1983. As a member of COL, she worked on GSS from 1979 until the present and sat as Assistant Chair of GSS at the February and July 1983 meetings.

At the General Conference in July 1983, Jackie was elected as Chair of COL.

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FULL YEAR (12 issues) 20% off
HALF YEAR (6 issues) 10% off

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Profiles

FELLOWSHIP STAFF

Newest Additions

FRONT ROW: Cory Allison, Ravi Verma. SECOND ROW: Maryanne Mulligan (volunteer worker), Tony Gotlibowski, Sue Kirkland and Paul Nance.

Paul Nance

Paul Nance was born in Detroit, Michigan in 1957 and was the fifth child in a family of six children. He lived with his family in Hazel Park, MI until the age of nine when his father moved the family to rural Northeast Arkansas to take over Paul's Grandfather's farm. For Paul this was a culture shock. He said he always knew he would move back to the city but had no idea it would be Los Angeles.

Paul graduated a member of the National Honor Society from McCrory High School in 1976 and worked his way through college, graduating from the University of Arkansas, in Fayetteville, with a Bachelor of Arts in architecture in December, 1982.

Paul grew up in and was a member of the Church of Christ. After receiving a revelation from God about his sexuality, Paul said he had the desire to seek out people of his own sexual preference and share the message. That is when he found MCC of the Ozarks in Fayetteville.

Paul's best friend, Brad Anderson, who was a student clergy of MCC of the Ozarks at that time, introduced Paul to Rev. Troy Perry who suggested Paul visit Los Angeles during Gay Pride Week. Paul said he instantly fell in love with the city and thanked God for the freedom he had finally found.

In March Paul moved to L.A. Since then Paul met his lover, Rodney Rose, and they currently live in Hollywood. He says he is seeking permanent employment in architecture or the engineering drafting field. In his free time he enjoys weight-lifting, listening to New Wave Music and traveling.

Paul is currently employed at UFMCC functioning as secretary to the Executive Offices. He is responsible for sending out thank you letters to persons donating to the Television Fund and World Church Extension and helps in the updating of the Fellowship Directory, maintains lists of newly licensed clergy, available clergy and available pulpits as well as any filing or correspondence requested by Rev. Perry or Rev. Wilson.

Sue Kirkland

Sue Kirkland was born in the small western Kentucky town of Rumsey. The youngest of three children, she enjoyed the freedom and adventure of farm living in her youth. She graduated from Sacramento High School as a member of the Beta Club, then received a scholarship to Murray State University in Murray, KY where she received a Bachelor of Music Education degree in 1972.

After graduation she enjoyed a five year career in teaching secondary instrumental music. In the fall of 1977 she joined friends in the Los Angeles area, became involved with MCC Long Beach and has served as Treasurer of the Board of Directors for the last three years.

It was through MCC Long Beach that she met her spouse, Karen Gregg, who is a student clergy there. According to Sue, "The most exciting things happen when we give our lives over to God's service. You never know where you may be used. Karen and I enjoy our time together preparing for the ministry and working with other MCCs in the area."

In May Sue was hired as temporary assistant to the bookkeeper. As a result of the changes in personnel, Sue now is a full time employee. As Administrative Assistant, she is in charge of the accounting for UFMCC.

Tony Gotlibowski

Anthony J. Gotlibowski, Jr. (Tony) was born on December 2, 1947 in a city that was then known as the Hardware Capital of the World, New Britain, CT.

His elementary and junior high school experience were in Polish Catholic Parochial Schools. He said that high school was his first experience outside of the Polish Catholic community. After graduating in 1965, he attended the Crown Academy of Hairdressing and graduated in 1966.

"I was married in 1968 and in 1973 became a very proud father of a wonderful

daughter, Tina Maria." Tony brings his daughter into almost every conversation he has. He is, in his words, a super proud Daddy.

Tony came to California in 1976, divorced in 1977, and says that besides his former wife, his best friend is Jack Owen Jason Montgomery.

"I've had many MCC experiences but didn't get totally involved until 1982 when I became a member of MCC Van Nuys." Tony is now a deacon candidate there with aspirations of becoming a clergyperson.

Tony began attending Samaritan this semester and says he is really looking forward to "what our heavenly Creator has in store for me."

Employed full time with UFMCC, Tony is in charge of all aspects of Church Services including shipping and receiving, inventory control, accounting for Church Services, updating all mailing lists and is also responsible for all mailings sent from the Fellowship offices.

Cory Allison

Cory Allison was born in Houston, Texas and has attended Lee College in Baytown, Texas and Los Angeles City College. In December of 1973, she moved to Los Angeles and in 1976 became a staff member of the Alcoholism Center for Women, Inc. doing outreach in the greater L.A. area through presentations, workshops and lectures on *Alcoholism Education, A Sensitivity to the Lesbian and Gay Client, Women and Alcoholism* and *Public Speaking.* These were presented to the alcoholism/drug community, the Lesbian/Gay community, the Women's community, to hospital and clinic staffs, institutionalized women, schools and institutions of higher learning and civic groups.

Cory has served both as a member of the Board of Directors of ACW and the Women's Commission on Alcoholism. In 1979 she did investigative field research on *Skid-Row Women* for the clinical textbook, *Women Who Drink.* Cory has also served as consultant to Employee Assistant Programs, the Los Angeles Police Department Training Academy and to an all-woman Japanese delegation, from the city of Yokohama, who acted as an advisory group on the needs of alcoholic Japanese women.

Cory, granddaughter of a minister, is now attending Samaritan in addition to being Receptionist/Clerk for the UFMCC main office. She is a member of MCC Los Angeles.

Profiles

Director of Administration

by Paula Schoenwether
Editor

Ravi Verma, 32, is the Director of Administration of the Fellowship, a new position which was created by the Board of Elders during reorganization of the offices.

Involvement with UFMCC is nothing new for Ravi. He has been a member of MCC Pittsburgh since 1977 and was the Mid Atlantic district lay representative. He is presently a member of the Research and Development Council, a group whose job is to advise the Board of Elders.

Ravi talked about his passion for the church and what we are doing. He said, although he enjoyed his previous job where he coordinated research and marketing efforts, and supervised technical and support personnel, he did not feel passionately about it. Ravi explained, "I wanted more involvement in the church but didn't see how I could combine that with my career." He added he felt "something was going to happen."

When Ravi heard about the new position being offered he said, "I saw potential to have passionate feelings about the church and my job at the same time." He also said that it fit into his long range career plans.

When talking about his job as Director, Ravi explained, "We are a service organization and we exist to serve the entire Fellowship. We need to organize to be able to serve the Fellowship effectively and efficiently, and also to acknowledge that we are at a transition time in our entire structure, and on the brink of tremendous growth. We need to have a strong base in order to support the Fellowship."

Ravi, who was born in Bombay, India, said one of the reasons he continues to live in the U.S. is because of UFMCC. He also says he's not sure he'll be here forever but has no plans to return to India in the foreseeable future.

Ravi earned his Masters of Business Administration at the University of Pittsburgh in 1977 and his Masters of Science in Metallurgy and Material Science at Lehigh University in 1976. His B.S. degree was in Metallurgical Engineering at the College of Engineering in Poona, India.

CONTEST

JOURNEY magazine is proud to announce its first literary contest. The deadline for the Valentine's Day Story Contest is December 15, 1983.

The contest will offer two classifications. The youth classification will be for those 16 and under and the adult classification will be for those 17 and over. The rules for both are the same. Your short story should be no more than seven type written pages, double spaced.

The collective members will judge each entry for 1) Originality 2) Style and 3) Content. First place from each classification will be published in the January, 1984 issue of *JOURNEY*. Second and third place winners' names will be announced at that time.

PRIZES – Prizes for the first place adult winner is either *CHRISTIANITY, SOCIAL TOLERANCE AND HOMOSEXUALITY*, in paperback by James Boswell or *THE DIVINE FEMININE* by Virginia Mollenkott and a year's subscription to *JOURNEY*. Second and third place winners will receive *JOURNEY* for a year.

First place prize in the youth category will be a calculator and *JOURNEY* for a year. A year's subscription to *JOURNEY* will be awarded to the second and third place winners.

When entering, please include your name, address and indicate adult or youth classification. If you have a picture we'd love that, too. We regret that we will be unable to return stories or pictures to contestants.

Samaritan Profiles

Sherre Boothman, Dean of Samaritan

by Bruce M. Kassalow
Operations Manager

I have worked at Samaritan for a year now. These past 12 months have provided me with the most unique experience of my lifetime. I am a Jewish non-member of the UFMCC. My previous vocational background included finance and public relations. I never imagined I would find myself an unflinching advocate of Christian Education. I am an absolute convert to Samaritan's unique educational ministry. The college and extended studies division have something very special to offer the members of its Fellowship and others, otherwise unavailable at a place of higher learning.

I had the great joy of watching Samaritan's Fall Semester for 1983/1984 begin recently. The September turnout was record breaking. The school is also currently blessed with a considerable theological diversity in its student population. Instructors have remarked that they are finding the school's present philosophical atmosphere the most stimulating yet. Like the UFMCC, Samaritan has come a very long way in a few short years. Its very essence has taught me the true meaning of Christianity. I will forever treasure these past 12 months.

It is my great honor and pleasure to introduce all of you to the Rev. Sherre Louise Boothman, the new Dean of Samaritan College. Sherre began her work here in Los Angeles at the beginning of September. She is a gifted educator as well as a highly dedicated spiritual leader.

Sherre was born on November 28, 1953 in Houston, TX. She received her primary education in the Kingsville Independent School District, in Kingsville, TX. She did her undergraduate work at Austin College, Austin TX, beginning in 1973. There she received a B.A. in History. Her post graduate work at Austin College earned her a Masters in Education. Sherre comes directly to Samaritan from MCC Rockville, MD where she served as Worship Coordinator. She was also studying advanced theology as Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC. Her spouse, the Rev. Marianne VanFossen is currently the Pastor of MCC NOVA, in Northern Virginia. Marianne will relocate to the Los Angeles area in February, 1984.

The following are excerpts from a recent conversation I had with Sherre.

I asked Sherre how she was finding Los Angeles.

"It's big!" She laughed. "I really like it. It's a beautiful city. I really love the people I've met and I'm looking forward to working with the churches here. I really have enjoyed the pastors and the staff people I've met so far."

I asked Sherre what her Fellowship-wide goals are for Samaritan.

"I think the first priority of the College is to help develop the training program for Student Clergy. I feel that is our primary educational goal. In terms of the school itself, we are working right now at increasing our accountability to the entire membership of UFMCC. We want everyone to know what's going on not only in terms of education, but in our overall financial and operating situation as well. We want to develop more extensive programming at the school itself. We hope to increase the number of classes being offered in a given semester, and thus take even greater advantage of the teaching gifts available to us in Southern California. The Extended Studies Division is focusing its primary efforts right now in adult education programming and is requesting that all churches submit any adult education curricula they have developed for Fellowship-wide use.

"The major program underway right now is a program Samaritan will be running this summer at three different locations in the United States. It will be called *An Orientation to MCC Pastoring*. It will focus on the practical aspects of pastoring. It will pay particular concern to those aspects of pastoring particularly unique to MCC. It will involve faculty from all over the Fellowship. Perceived experts in related fields will also be invited to participate. We are hoping to run this program annually. Each year it will involve different folks. It will enable us to develop a comprehensive training program for student clergy. We hope to formulate the materials into book form which might assist local pastors in their supervising the practical and academic training of Student Clergy."

I asked Sherre how she would best lend her educational expertise to Samaritan College.

"Some very basic foundational organizing has to be done this year. That will be the particular focus of this year's work.

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reas of the College lack educational e. We also hope to develop statistics will enable us to proceed into the with better vision. My educational e will assist me to teach others to teach Christian Education."

sked Sherre how, in her view, the hip could best support Samaritan.

hope they will lift us up in prayer y. Educational Ministries are a vital our responsibility as churches and nomination. We encourage everyone e their own educational resources . There has been a lot of beautiful ming coming out of local churches. everyone to share your resources . It's a major way in which both ed Studies and the College can be ed by the Fellowship – by sharing ith individuals and churches. If all will share with Samaritan, the will share your ideas with everyone

maritan specifically needs your for the great challenge it faces lly. The school is about to ex- its most ambitious year, yet it still self $1,000 a month less than it or basic operation. This ministry ave loyal supporters who tithe and often can be turned to for special favor. We wish that Samaritan could be everyone's special favor at this time. We want to continue to serve all of you in the UFMCC with the best possible educational ministries we can give you. You all deserve it."

It will be a pleasure working with Sherre. She will provide me with still another learning experience as a member of another faith working very close to the pulse of a most unusual denomination. I praise God for my opportunity here. I thank God for every one of you reading *JOURNEY*. It is just one of the many special expressions of the UFMCC offering a taste of its very own approach to Christianity. In one loving Jew's opinion, there is nothing like this Fellowship anywhere on this earth or elsewhere. ■

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on, USA, Canada and Mexico.

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to UFMCC.
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00 Santa Monica Blvd., Ste. 304,

and direct, as with the pathetic drug queen who seduces our hero.

The author also reveals a practical yet sensitive grasp on Gay life, one that leaves the reader feeling that it's really okay to be Gay. That, by itself, would make this book well worth the reading.

CHINA HOUSE **by Vincent Lardo, published by Alyson Publications.**

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Atlanta, Georgia

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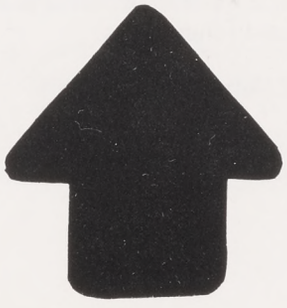

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Samari

PROFILE

Sherre Boothman, Dean of Samaritan

by Bruce M. Kassalow
Operations Manager

I have worked at Samaritan for a year now. These past 12 months have provided me with the most unique experience of my lifetime. I am a Jewish non-member of the UFMCC. My previous vocational background included finance and public relations. I never imagined I would find myself an unflinching advocate of Christian Education. I am an absolute convert to Samaritan's unique educational ministry. The college and extended studies division have something very special to offer the members of its Fellowship and others, otherwise unavailable at a place of higher learning.

I had the great joy of watching Samaritan's Fall Semester for 1983/1984 begin recently. The September turnout was record breaking. The school is also currently blessed with a considerable theological diversity in its student population. Instructors have remarked that they are finding the school's present philosophical atmosphere the most stimulating yet. Like the UFMCC, Samaritan has come a very long way in a few short years. Its very essence has taught me the true m
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Sherre was born on November 28, 1953 in Houston, TX. She received her primary education in the Kingsville Independent School District, in Kingsville, TX. She did her undergraduate work at Austin College, Austin TX, beginning in 1973. There she received a B.A. in History. Her post graduate work at Austin College earned her a Masters in Education. Sherre comes directly to Samaritan from MCC Rockville, MD where she served as Worship Coordinator. She was also studying advanced theology as Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC. Her spouse, the Rev. Marianne VanFossen is currently the Pastor of MCC NOVA, in Northern Virginia. Marianne will relocate to the Los Angeles area in February, 1984.

The following are excerpts from a recent conversation I had with Sherre.

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"Some very basic foundational organizing has to be done this year. That will be the particular focus of this year's work.

continued on page 9

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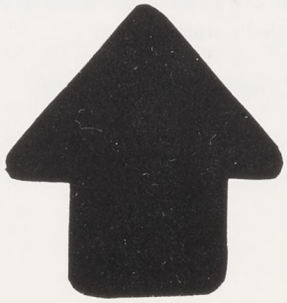

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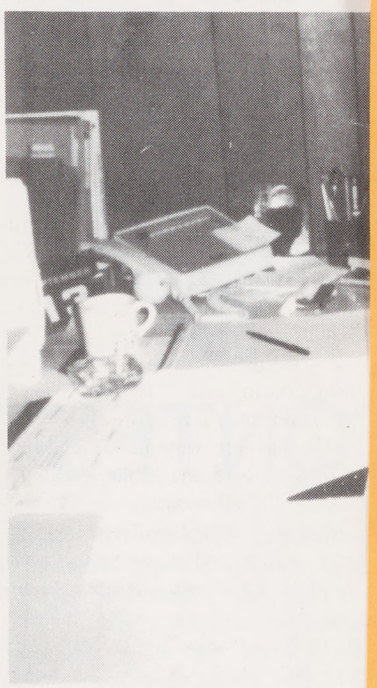

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I asked Sherre how she would best lend her educational expertise to Samaritan College.

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continued on page 9

books — a review

by Kurt Kreisler
Collective Member

DEATH TRICK by Richard Stevenson, published by Alyson Publications

Although the title of this novel sounds more like the publisher chose it for effect rather than being chosen by the author (since writers often, unfortunately, put as much effort into choosing a title as they do a plot line), Richard Stevenson comes across well in this book. It is cleverly written, easy to read and shows the author's obvious polish.

As a detective story, it has enough of the necessary ingredients to keep a Gay male reading through to the end. However, it lacks suspense. There are few, if any, of those moments in the book. Stevenson displays an amazing talent with the metaphor and his insights into his characters are hard hitting yet simple and direct, as with the pathetic drag queen who seduces our hero.

The author also reveals a practical yet sensitive grasp on Gay life, one that leaves the reader feeling that it's really okay to be Gay. That, by itself, would make this book well worth the reading.

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I found only one thing disconcerting. At times it was a little difficult to grasp Lardo's sudden changes in scene or time. It eventually works its way out but is confusing at the moment. If one can overlook this one small flaw, however, he makes it well worth the effort. His talent for creating palpable atmosphere and believable characters easily pulls the reader deep into the action.

However, as with most books of its genre, being written by a man, it probably holds little for the Lesbian reader. There is one main female character but I doubt that she alone would sustain such a reader's interest.

Congratulations Vincent Lardo for giving us such an exotic tale. And, thank you, Alyson Publications, for giving such authors the chance to share their talents! Thoroughly enjoyable reading! ■

A Response To The Moral Majority

A Letter to the Editor in the August 22, 1983 issue of *Newsweek* magazine in response to the August 8 cover story of *Newsweek*, "Gay America: Sex, Politics, and the Impact of AIDS":

> "If we accept the notion of Jerry Falwell and others that AIDS represents God's punishment to erring homosexuals, then it stands to reason that Lesbians - virtually untouched by AIDS or sexually transmitted diseases - must be God's chosen people."

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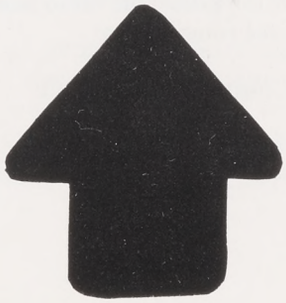

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Many areas of the College lack educational structure. We also hope to develop statistics which will enable us to proceed into the future with better vision. My educational expertise will assist me to teach others *HOW* to teach Christian Education."

I asked Sherre how, in her view, the Fellowship could best support Samaritan.

"I hope they will lift us up in prayer regularly. Educational Ministries are a vital part of our responsibility as churches and as a denomination. We encourage everyone to share their own educational resources with us. There has been a lot of beautiful programming coming out of local churches. I urge everyone to share your resources with us. It's a major way in which both Extended Studies and the College can be supported by the Fellowship – by sharing ideas with individuals and churches. If all of you will share with Samaritan, the school will share your ideas with everyone else!

"Samaritan specifically needs your prayers for the great challenge it faces financially. The school is about to experience its most ambitious year, yet it still finds itself $1,000 a month less than it needs for basic operation. This ministry does have loyal supporters who tithe monthly and often can be turned to for special favor. We wish that Samaritan could be everyone's special favor at this time. We want to continue to serve all of you in the UFMCC with the best possible educational ministries we can give you. You all deserve it."

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UFMCC's Commission on Faith, Fellowship and Order

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article by Rev. Jennie Boyd Bull is Part One of a two part series titled "The Eucharist as Embodiment: Toward a Sacramental Theology of Sexuality." The excerpts are taken from her ordination paper.

FFO is developing a grass roots Christian Theology of Sexuality. The following does not report an official stand of the commission.

by Jennie Boyd Bull
Chair, FFO

"Embodiment" is a term used by James Nelson in his book of that title, *EMBODIMENT: AN APPROACH TO SEXUALITY AND CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY.* The book's primary focus, and one that is shared in this article, is that God's acts are always "embodied" in the reality of human history and in our sexuality, in the fullest sense of personhood as male and female. "The Word is made *flesh* and dwells among us, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14). In particular, Nelson seeks to refute traditional western Christian concepts of spirit/flesh dualism and subsequent degradation of the bodily, which has in turn led to ascetic denial of sexuality by much of Christianity. In one sense, for Nelson embodiment is another word for incarnation, the essential Christian mystery that God and world, spirit and flesh, divine and human are made one in Christ. However, it is the particular strength of this word that it helps one focus on the "bodiliness" of Christianity. As Nelson States:

Sexuality is a sign, a symbol, and a means of our call to communication and communion. This is most apparent in regard to other human beings, other body-selves. The mystery of our sexuality is the mystery of our need to reach out to embrace others both physically and spiritually. Sexuality thus expresses God's intention that we find our authentic humanness in relationship. But such humanizing relationship cannot occur on the human dimension alone. Sexuality, we must also say, is intrinsic to our relationship with God.

This article will approach eucharist from this perspective of embodiment. More importantly, eucharist will be used to give full meaning to sexuality, to define it. One implication of this approach is that it necessitates primary consideration of the embodied reality of eucharist, its real place in worship, practice by real people with real elements in real congregations today, in situations of historical particularity. This paper will begin with that perspective; the eucharist will be described as it is celebrated in UFMCC worship, not primarily as defined in the UFMCC Statement of Faith or any other credal or theological statement. Then the discussion will proceed to specific elements of eucharist as they are embodied in worship: the role of the priest, the bread and wine, the assembled congregation.

Church as Sacrament

Part of this theological perspective is an ecclesiology seeing the Church as Sacrament, as the Body of Christ broken for the life of the world, risen to newness of life in community and living in present joy of the future parousia.

"Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again."

As the Church, the Body of Christ, we are called to "die," broken in service to the world; the risen Christ is present among us in the power of the Holy Spirit; and we live in present joy at the future feasting with Christ.

"Christ has died" speaks of our brokenness, sexually.

As Ernest Becker says in *DENIAL OF DEATH*, the particular dilemma of our sexuality is that it both keenly reminds us of our bodiliness, our mortality, and of our transcendence, our symbolic creativity as a "sign" of relationship. "Sex is an inevitable component of human confusion over the meaning of life, a meaning split hopelessly into two realms – symbols (freedom) and body (fate)." As human beings, we are constantly aware of the brokenness of our bodies around sexuality, not only through the obvious brokenness of sexual violence, abuse, incest, rape, but through the "petit mort" of the fleeting orgasmic experience, the loneliness of physical passion without emotional and spiritual intimacy, the fears of sexuality that bind our hearts and bodies from the full enjoyment of ourselves and a loved one. So many of us are ashamed of,

even hate our bodies.

"Christ is risen" speaks of relationship

Christ present with us in resurrection signifies the reality of sexuality as a feasting, a healing, a shared love in relationship that is at the core of the resurrection as a present intimacy with Christ and with each other as the Body of Christ. Just as in eucharist we feast, celebrate, know the healing of being present with one another and with Christ, so in sexuality we feast on each other, celebrate our union, know the healing of that intimacy. A holy union is not only that love celebrated between two people, but also the union we know in eucharist with Christ at the feast of the Lamb. The male/bridegroom/Christ and female/Bride/Church image has been used for centuries to promote dualism, sexist hierarchy, excluding women from priesting, and a host of other tragic sins but the sexual imagery implicit in the marriage feast must not be lost. The image must be redeemed as "holy union" with our God. We as the Body of Christ (with the priest as one among many) are both male and female (Gal. 3:28), made one with God at the marriage feast (Song of Solomon 2), the communion of saints (Rev. 19). And that union includes the fullness of our bodiliness, the resurrection of the body, our sexual fullness in God. And the Holy Spirit is that passion that binds us together, pulls us toward each other in giving and receiving, mutuality, openness to one another.

"Christ will come again" is the resurrection of the body

As a resurrection people, Christians know the hope of resurrection beyond death; we know forgiveness, that bodily decay is not the final reality, that fear of death may be overcome in the hope of Christian community in God's grace.

Personal Embodiment

These three faith acclamations about Christ reflect a major theological struggle in my own life. The maleness of Jesus has been a major question: How can I as a Lesbian, who claims that sexuality is one aspect of the fullness of spirituality, celebrate holy union with a male Christ? My spiritual journey on this has been, and continues to be, a healing and growing one.

. . . First I needed to claim that God could be woman for me, and in the process claimed selflove as a woman, God's love of me as a woman. One of my most profound experiences of grace was God speaking to me as a woman while I was spending time alone with my body, during a painful time of separation from women. She said to me, "Did you forget about me?"

. . . That freed me to accept Jesus as a man without ultimate authority in his maleness, rather seeing *all* of him as friend, dance partner, one with authority based in trusting relationship.

. . . I struggled with sexual attraction to men. It was not until I accepted that it was ok to have sexual feelings for men, that they did not threaten my primary, deeper attraction to women, and that I chose to act on my feelings for women, ie., once I accepted the full range of my own sexuality, that the question of the sexuality of Jesus also became less threatening and primary.

. . . My view of sexuality broadened from a genital focus to a sense of myself as a sexual person in all of my relating: for example, intense intimacy with friends is important, acknowledging the sexual aspect of that intensity but understanding no need or desire for genital activity, I grew to separate the need for physical intimacy from genital relating and came to cherish many diverse forms. Worship times also include sexual excitement and intimacy and preaching is an act of releasing sexual energy, in some sense "making love" with the congregation. All of these are personal experiences that have helped me get beyond the focus on what I do or do not do genitally, and with whom, but on fulfilling my sexual needs in a variety of ways.

In our culture, women are taught that intimate bonding and sexuality can only happen with one person, and any sexual feelings must be accompanied by romantic love. It has been a slow, growing process for me to broaden my intimacy openness, allowing my feelings to expand to more than one, loving myself. It is a growth in selflove, of openness to loving others in nondependent ways, of a supportive web of friendship in which sexuality is only one aspect. I still have "miles to go" in all of this, but at the moment, three years of being single and the ways this has forced me to deal with intimacy, friendship, sexual feelings and needs, is one of the best gifts God could give me. (One always feels ambivalent about gifts, methinks.)

In the male culture, both Gay and straight, one of the brokennesses is the separation of the sexual from the emotional and spiritual, leaving many men relating genitally, and genitally focused, without any risk of feelings or meeting of intimacy needs. We all come at brokenness from different places. Genital sexuality without relatedness is like an empty sign, a eucharist of motions and words without feeling or love. Another important relation of eucharist and sexuality is that both eucharist and worship are but a part of the fullness of our life. All life is eucharistic, is worshipful, and the experience of eucharist itself as sacrament is an embodied sign of what is true for all creation. Just so, our genital sexual relating is a sign, (a sacrament?) of the fullness of all our relating.

Embodiment in Priest

The question of the priest as "sign" of Christ in eucharist, at the head of the table sharing with the disciples in the words of institution, has a symbolic role in signifying the incarnation of God in humanity. Schmemann states it profoundly:

> *The first, the basic definition of (humanity) is that (we) are the priest. We stand in the center of the world and unify it in our act of blessing God, of both receiving the world from God and offering it to God -- and by filling the world with this eucharist, we transform our life, the one that we receive from the world, into life in God, into communion with God. The world was created as the "matter," the material of one all-embracing eucharist, and (humanity) was created as the priest of this cosmic sacrament.*

Romans 1:25 has always testified to me of my purpose as a human being, to worship and serve God. It also defines sin as the idolatry of worshipping and serving the

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ffo

FFO representatives will be writing articles regarding a Christian Theology of Sexuality to be published in *JOURNEY*. These articles are the opinion of the individual author and do not represent the opinion of FFO.

2 in 1 BED

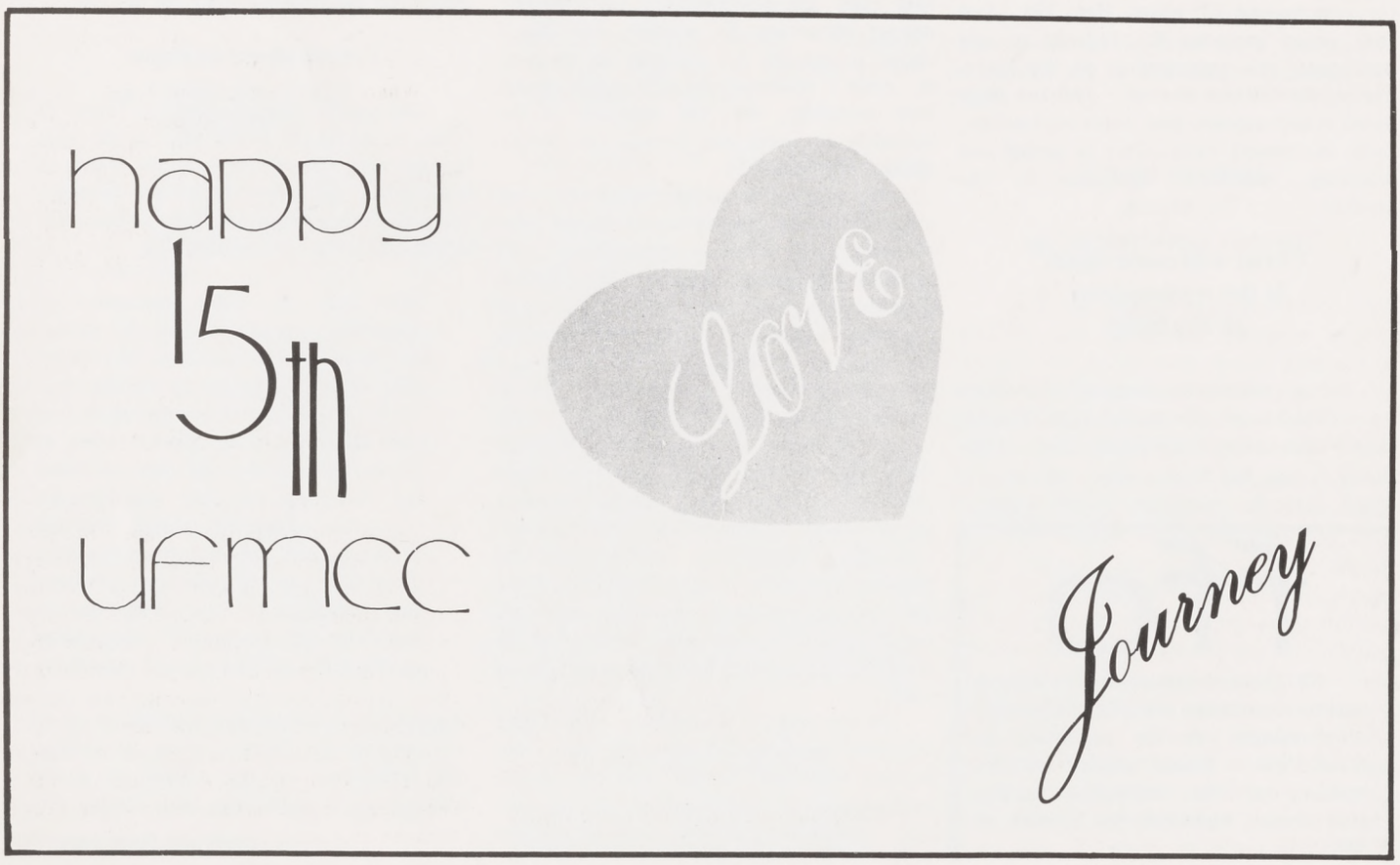
by Bob Arthur
Collective Writer

I am frequently called upon to do my four hour seminar on homosexuality and the Bible. I have done it in many different places, and one question that arises quite regularly is in regards to the passage in Luke 17:34: "I tell you, in that night there shall be two *men* in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left." (KJV) *JOURNEY* also received a letter asking that I do an article on this passage, commenting on any possible homosexual connotations in it.

The first comment I would like to make is that the word *men* is not in the Greek (thus the italics in the KJV). The word for two is the Greek word *duo* which has no gender, but is used as either masculine or feminine. However, the words translated *the one* and *the other* are masculine in form. This has given cause for at least a raised eyebrow, especially since in the next verse the two grinding are referred to with feminine forms of the words *the one* and *the other*.

We, first of all, must remember that in society of that time, grinding was a woman's job, and so the feminine adjectives *one* and *other* would most likely be construed as modifying the understood feminine noun *gune* which means woman. However, when we have two people in one bed, even if there were one man and one woman, the understood noun would be *anthropos* which means person. Since *anthropos* is a masculine noun, the adjectives *one* and *other* would necessarily be masculine in form. We cannot, therefore determine anything about the gender of the people in that bed by the words which are used in this text.

An additional observation we should make about this verse is the word that is translated *bed*. Greek has three words which we translate into English with the word bed: *kline, koite, krabbatos. Krabbatos* means the basic mattress or even a stretcher. *Koite* means the bed in which one sleeps and has sexual intercourse (we get our English word coitus from this word). *Kline* is the term used for the bed on which one reclines for resting, eating, or when sick. *Kline* is the word used in this verse. This word is used nine times in the New Testament including this verse. In all eight other cases it is used as a sick-bed. So even if the two in bed were both men, they were not in bed for sexual purposes, but most likely because they were sick or resting or eating. For this reason, my response to questions on this verse is that I see no evidence of any reference to homosexuality here.



fellowship news
our journey

LITTLE GROUP – BIG TASK

Gearing up for winter, members and friends of MCC Buffalo started early - planning, organizing, working to make their vision of a "Community Emergency Services Program" (CESP) a reality.

Buffalo is among the hardest hit and most depressed areas economically in the United States. MCC Buffalo, a group which has grown from five or six last April to about 30 people now, has worked all summer to develop this massive program of emergency aid to the Gay and Lesbian community.

CESP involves three aspects: (1) A Food Pantry to provide food for community members in need; (2) Emergency Cash Assistance - to utility companies with cut-off notices or landlords with evictions, etc.; (3) a "Blessing File" - a file of 3 x 5 cards on which is written items which an individual is willing to donate to another in need. (Items such as bedding, dishes, pots and pans, etc.) Since MCC has no storage space, the donor keeps items stored in his/her own home until a request comes. The record, however, is kept by the CESP Committee Member who will make necessary contacts when need arises.

The CESP is aimed toward meeting the needs of those persons in our community who "fall through the cracks" of traditional sources of help - those who may not be able to turn to their family or mainstream churches or social services agencies. The program is administered by the CESP Committee of MCC who developed forms for eligibility, guidelines, etc. The fund is kept in a separate account and statistics will be published quarterly in the local Gay and Lesbian media.

MCC members have organized several fund raisers and food drives and have contacted other Gay and Lesbian organizations throughout Buffalo to encourage support and participation. The results have been surprisingly successful. Such co-operation in the Buffalo community is unprecedented. Other groups are making pledges and sending cash donations as well as planning benefits and fund raising events to help out.

In addition to monitoring collection for several "Food Baskets" in Gay and Lesbian businesses, bars, etc. in the greater Buffalo area, MCC members bring items each Sunday to keep the pantry stocked. The group also has a special second offering on the first Sunday of each month exclusively to keep CESP in operation.

What a witness to the whole community - "being Jesus to people" - for I was hungry and you fed me! CESP serves both members and non-members of MCC. The whole project serves to remind us what a small group of committed people can do with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and a lot of hard work!

Sherry L. Kennedy, Worship Coordinator of MCC Buffalo sees a vision become reality in one of two local Food Pantries.

DINNER PROGRAM FOR HOMELESS WOMEN

The Dinner Program for Homeless Women recently received a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in the amount of $3,000 to expand their good works. Gene SirLouis, a member of Metropolitan Community Church of Washington, is the Volunteer Coordinator of the program and was instrumental in obtaining the grant.

The program was started by MCC DC and First Congregational Church and has been feeding the area's hungry for over three years.

Western Clergy Conference

Western Clergy Conference will be held November 8-11, in San Diego, California (right after the Southwest District Conference, also in San Diego). The four-day Clergy Conference runs from Tuesday noon until late Friday afternoon. As usual, the conference will feature fellowshipping and sharing, worship, workshops and Samaritan Seminars, and presentations by a guest resource person.

There will be a pre-conference workshop, *On Death and Dying*, Monday, November 7, led by Sharon Tobin, M.S.W., a psychotherapist who has trained with Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. Tobin will lead this marathon session from 10 AM until late in the evening. *Registration is limited to 25 persons*, who must be present for the whole time and who cannot leave for phone calls or anything else. Meals will be brought in. Send in your registration form for this pre-conference workshop right away; it is limited to the first 25 registrants. The $25 fee includes both lunch and dinner.

The guest resource person for the Clergy Conference is James Nelson, Ph.D., Professor of Christian Ethics at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, and author of *Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology*. Dr. Nelson was well received at our Eastern Clergy Conference in 1982 and has been enthusiastically invited back for West Coast conference. He will be doing his presentations on Thursday and Friday.

Workshops offered during the conference will be: *Clergy and Transitions*, led by Nancy Radclyffe and Joseph Gilbert (handling job loss and transition through resignation or firing, going through the grieving process, dealing with one's reputation in the Fellowship, etc.); *Clergy Sharing About Sexual Socialization*, led by Bob Jones and Jodi Safier (a non-judgmental forum to share about intimacy, sensuality and sexual ethics); and *On Death and Dying*, led by Sharon Tobin (a much-abbreviated version of the pre-conference workshop).

Two six-hour Samaritan Seminars will be offered simultaneously: *Making Good Teaching Better*, led by Sherre Boothman, and *Making Good Preaching Better*, led by Jeff Pulling. One-half credit can be earned for each of these seminars at a tuition charge of $12.50. Anyone may audit for free. There will be no follow-up projects; all work will be done during the seminar time.

Also during the conference there will be ample time for ad hoc interest and sharing groups. Please send suggestions to Rev. Jeffrey Pulling.

The registration fee for the Clergy Conference (not including the pre-conference workshop on Monday) is $65. This includes four luncheons. Make checks payable in U.S. funds to "Clergy Conference Fund."

For housing you may stay at your own cost in a motel/hotel or request housing from the host church when you send in your registration form.

Please send both registration and housing forms to Pulling at the below Connecticut address, not to the Fellowship offices. The registration deadline is October 15.

All clergy, student clergy and spouses are invited to attend. ■

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rdc

Research & Development Council Begins 2nd Challenging Year

by Pat Warriner
Member RDC

Over a year ago several dedicated Metropolitan Community Church members took up the challenge issued by the Board of Elders to analyze Fellowship administrative and financial concerns and to formulate creative solutions for presentation back to the Board of Elders.

This team of MCC'rs from various Churches and a wide range of backgrounds and experience became known as the Research & Development Council (RDC). Members of the Council include Bruce Harmon (Salt Lake City, Utah), Paul Sheldon (Alameda, California), Pat Warriner (Sacramento, California) and Kerry Brown (Los Angeles, California), with representative Elders Rev. Nancy Wilson and Michael Mank. Ravi Verma, Fellowship Director of Administration is an ongoing consultant to the RDC.

During its first year the Council has been instrumental in developing the UFMCC Clergy Pension Proposal which was recently approved at General Conference in Toronto. In addition, the RDC recommended changes for the Fellowship offices in Los Angeles that have resulted in a more administratively efficient and effective central office at the international level.

RDC meetings were recently held in San Francisco on September 9-10. In those meetings further changes for the Fellowship office were discussed. Rev. Sherre Boothman, Dean of Samaritan College, presented SEC program goals and objectives as well, and plans were made to develop a skills inventory questionnaire for distribution throughout the Fellowship seeking expertise in specific areas of administrative and financial management. The Council hopes for a high return rate of questionnaires providing a resource bank of expert consultants to call on for input and advice.

The next Research & Development Council meetings are scheduled for January 13-16, 1984, in Los Angeles. ■

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creature (including our sexuality – so many of us make sex into God, make human relationships into God).

However, emphasis on the priest as *head* of the body has supported a hierarchical understanding of the realm of God. The radical equalizing of the meals of the kingdom portrays tax collectors and sinners all sharing equally with Jesus, who is among us as one who serves, washing our feet (John 13). The sexual dualism of Christian tradition, fed by references to Christ as male/head/husband and Church as female/body/wife (Ephesians 5:23) has contributed to denial of the bodily, the sexual and the female, and thus has led to exclusion of women from service at the eucharistic table for much of the Christian tradition. This alienating specificity betrays the false understanding that women are not fully created in God's image. Nelson argues that our understanding of God as a unity of transcendence and imanence is paralleled by our understanding of true humanity as androgynous, claiming the polarities within each of us rather than a dualistic dichotomization of our selfhood – or of God. The eschatalogical realm overcomes all dualisms, for in Christ there is neigher male nor female, but all are one in Christian baptism (Gal 3:27-28). Given this basic Pauline understanding of the nature of the realm of God, the commonwealth of God, then one implication for eucharist is that both women and men may stand as priest at the table. The union of male and female in the wholeness of gathered community with diverse gifts in the Spirit is the central Biblical, and eucharistic, image (I Cor. 12).

Concelebration of eucharist is also a powerful way to speak of the sexual experience, as con-celebrating together. The frequent concelebration I have experienced in MCC has spoken powerfully to me on several occasions, often in a sexual way, of the communion we all seek. It can be a powerful symbol of holy union. At General Conference 1983, the Commission on Faith, Fellowship and Order offered a eucharist that reflects this unity. All FFO commission members, lay and clergy, concelebrated. The worship service was led by speakers standing from among the people. All of us distributed communion. We gathered up the diversity of our Fellowship into one communion, one body con-celebrating the presence of Christ in each other and in our holy union. We named our brokenness, rejoiced in our oneness, celebrated our future work together as we continue to journey in relationship.

Part of the struggle with head/body dualism, and one that is especially poignant for me as a woman, is the ancient menstrual taboo that separated women from service at the altar. It is a supreme irony of the alienation of the sexes that the very blood of Christ that is elevated at the eucharist is the same substance that in women has prevented access to that elevation. Barbara Deming says,

> *Rape is an act by which men violently refuse to remember that the place they batter is the place that gave them birth.*

Too often our culture refuses to remember that blood is a primal symbol of life-giving in women, of birthing, of creation. I as a woman affirm that blood is for me a basic symbol of life, of the potential for life, of the often painful process of creation. Blood is *not* for me primarily a symbol of death, of woundedness, of life poured out to death, but rather *a sign of life poured out for life.* (See John 19:34 for an image of Jesus' life poured out as living water, for life). And this understanding gives much power to celebration of eucharist for me. As a woman, to stand at the altar and say, "This is my blood, poured out for you," is to speak profoundly of the mystery of death and life in the eucharistic meal. The exclusively male priesting of the sacrament for centuries has contributed to the "deathly" focus of the meal, in the sense that this life-giving understanding of blood is usually not acknowledged and is rather feared as some mysterious, "disembodied" power.

There is clear Hebraic precedent for this emphasis on blood as life:

> *For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.*
> *(Lev. 17:11)*

Nelson speaks of Hebrew holiness depending on order and separation, with those who embody transition or defy classification seen as "polluting." More to the point, perhaps, is the threat such disorder brings to power relations:

> *When rituals express anxiety about the body's orifices (menstruation would be a prime example) anthropologically they appear to express anxiety about the political and cultural unity of the social group.*

It is the institutional church's need for maintaining established social power relations of men over women that has brought emphasis on fear of menstruation, the taboo of female blood at the altar. And yet, the very nature of the eucharistic feast is that it is a supremely political act (sexual politics included), manifesting the essential unity of all creation in Christ, which no political or cultural unity or disunity of any social group can possibly threaten. And that unity is one of radical discontinuity with all earthly power relations and self-seeking of earthly status – the first shall be the last and the last, first. The menstruating woman as priest at the eucharist defies earthly power relations and embodies that radical new realm in a directly political way. And Christ embodies the radical discontinuity of a *man* who pours out his blood – not for death – but for *life*, the life of the world. This is a powerful resurrection statement, and a supremely political statement .

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question, "is sickle cell anemia God's gift to Blacks or is Legionnaire's disease God's gift to veterans for being too patriotic?" I said that I didn't believe any disease came from God, that God only gave us good things, not evil or bad things.

Fifteen years later UFMCC is still evolving, God is still blessing us and good things are still happening. Our recent meetings with the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA points to the fact that we are still a witness in this present age as we prepare for the National Council of Churches to take their vote on the eligibility of our denomination. I pray that we will remember where we came from and that we will see and have a vision of where it is we are going.

I thank God during these 15th Anniversary celebrations of our denomination, that God is still moving in our midst, that we are growing and carrying the message of love God gave us into all the world. And I pray that we will continue the good work that God has given us to do until our race is finished. We will not fail as long as we remember that we are children of a just God who will direct and guide us as long as we listen to God's voice.

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